



# Kerala

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## Best Wildlife-Watching

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## Best Homestays

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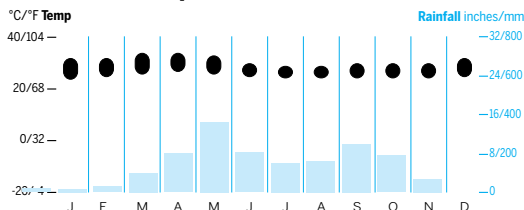
## Why Go?

A sliver of a coastal state in India's deep south, Kerala is shaped by its layered landscape: almost 600km of glorious Arabian Sea coast and beaches; a languid network of glistening backwaters; and the spice- and tea-covered hills of the Western Ghats. Just setting foot on this swathe of soul-quenching, palm-shaded green will slow your sub-continental stride to a blissed-out amble. Kerala is a world away from the frenzy of elsewhere, as if India had passed through the Looking Glass and become an altogether more laid-back place.

Besides its famous backwaters, elegant houseboats, ayurvedic treatments and delicately spiced, taste-bud-tingling cuisine, Kerala is home to wild elephants, exotic birds and the odd tiger, while vibrant traditions such as Kathakali plays, temple festivals and snake-boat races frequently bring even the smallest villages to life. It's hard to deny Kerala's liberal use of the slogan 'God's Own Country'.

## When to Go

### Thiruvananthapuram



**Dec–Feb** Perfect beach and back-water weather. Ernakulathappan Utsavam festival in Kochi.

**Apr** Kathakali at Kottayam and Kollam festivals, and the elephant procession in Thrissur.

**Aug–Oct** End of the monsoon period: Onam festival, snake-boat races.



## Kerala Highlights

- 1 Cruising in a houseboat or punted canoe through slippery **backwaters** (p288) from Alappuzha, Kollam or Kottayam
- 2 Spotting wild elephants at **Wayanad** (p317) amid mountain scenery and epic forest treks
- 3 Watching days slip away at the cliff-top beach resort

of **Varkala** (p274) or having some laid-back beach fun in **Kovalam** (p270)

- 4 Bedding down in a remote resort and trekking through emerald tea plantations around **Munnar** (p294)
- 5 Feeling the history and relaxing in a homestay in calm **Fort Cochin** (p298)

- 6 Experience a performance of **Kathakali** (p309) or the martial arts **kalaripayat** (p309) in Kochi
- 7 Calling in for a cuddle at the **ashram** (p281) of 'The Hugging Mother' in Amrithapuri
- 8 Exploring unspoilt beaches and **theyyam** rituals at **Kannur** (p320) and **Bekal** (p322)